

# The Office of Tony Blair

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## **Tony Blair partners with global education providers to break down barriers between religions**



Tony Blair today met with Sunny Varkey, Founder and Chairman of GEMS Education to discuss the role that the global education leaders can play in promoting respect and understanding of the world's major religions.

In 2008, Mr Blair founded the Tony Blair Faith Foundation to promote respect, friendship and understanding between the major religious faiths; and to make the case for faith itself as a relevant force for good in the world. Last year, the Foundation launched the Face to Faith Schools programme, which engages secondary school students of different faiths across the world in learning directly with, from and about each other.

Sunny Varkey welcomed Tony Blair to the GEMS Winchester School and World Academy in Dubai, saying:

"We are delighted to welcome Mr Blair to GEMS and to Dubai. The Tony Blair Faith Foundation schools programme, 'Face to Faith', is a wonderful educational initiative which Mr. Blair founded in order to help the world be a better place. As globalisation brings us all closer together we need to educate the children of the world about the importance of religious tolerance.

"We look forward to working with the Foundation to see how we can incorporate the 'Face to Faith' programme in our schools because we see it as an extension of the core values we instil in all our pupils. I sincerely hope that Mr Blair's visit will mark the start of a long-term relationship between the Faith Foundation and GEMS Education globally. With 100,000 students across 125 nationalities in GEMS schools, many of them in the Middle East, we believe we can play a significant role in promoting the importance of understanding and respect of different faiths".

During his visit to the Winchester School in Dubai, Tony Blair spoke with students from an Islamic education class, who were keen to get his perspective on inter-faith understanding and the place of religious values in modern society. He said:

"In today's world, religious tolerance amongst diverse faith and cultural groups is essential. Young people will be proud of their national identities whilst becoming global citizens. They need to learn skills that help them to learn how to respectfully discuss differences. This is why I established my Foundation, and specifically established the Face to Faith project where children of different faiths, cultures and geographies link up in open discussion with each other.

"Today, I have seen children from 87 nationalities in one GEMS school, learning about the world alongside each other. Good learning creates understanding, overcomes prejudice and opens dialogue. I am very pleased to be talking to GEMS about how we extend this."

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